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MOODS, SONGS, AND DOGGERELS

THE MOB

A PLAY IN FOUR ACTS

THE MOB

A PLAY IN FOUR ACTS

BY

JOHN GALSWORTHY

NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
1914

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CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

Published June, 1914

PERSONS OF THE PLAY

STEPHEN MORE, *Member of Parliament*
KATHERINE, *his wife*
OLIVE, *their little daughter*
THE DEAN OF STOUR, *Katherine's uncle*
GENERAL SIR JOHN JULIAN, *her father*
CAPTAIN HUBERT JULIAN, *her brother*
HELEN, *his wife*
EDWARD MENDIP, *editor of "The Parthenon"*
ALAN STEEL, *More's secretary*
JAMES HOME, *architect*
CHARLES SHELDER, *solicitor*
MARK WACE, *bookseller*
WILLIAM BANNING, *manufacturer*
} *A deputation of More's constituents*
NURSE WREFORD
WREFORD (*her son*), *Hubert's orderly*
HIS SWEETHEART
THE FOOTMAN HENRY
A DOORKEEPER
SOME BLACK-COATED GENTLEMEN
A STUDENT
A GIRL

A MOB

ACT I. The dining-room of More's town house, evening.
ACT II. The same, morning.
ACT III. SCENE I. An alley at the back of a suburban theatre.
SCENE II. Katherine's bedroom.
ACT IV. The dining-room of More's house, late afternoon.
AFTERMATH. The corner of a square, at dawn.

Between ACTS I and II some days elapse.
Between ACTS II and III three months.
Between ACT III SCENE I and ACT III SCENE II no time.
Between ACTS III and IV a few hours.
Between ACTS IV and AFTERMATH an indefinite period.

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CAST OF THE ORIGINAL PRODUCTION

AT THE

GAIETY THEATRE, MANCHESTER, MARCH 30, 1914

Stephen More	Milton Rosmer
Katherine	Irene Rooke
Olive	Phyllis Bourke
The Dean of Stour	Leonard Mudie
General Sir John Julian	Herbert Lomas
Captain Hubert Julian	William Home
Helen	Hilda Bruce Potter
Edward Mendip	D. Lewin Mannering
Alan Steel	Eric Barber
James Home	Archibald McClean
Charles Shelder	Percy Foster
Mark Wace	Napier Barry
William Banning	Charles Bibby
Nurse Wreford	Mrs. A. B. Tapping
Wreford	Cecil Calvert
His Sweetheart	Hilda Davies
The Footman Henry	Basil Holmes
A Doorkeeper	Alfred Russell
A Student	Ellis Dee
A Girl	Muriel Pope

ACT I

It is half-past nine of a July evening. In a dining-room lighted by sconces, and apparelled in wall-paper, carpet, and curtains of deep vivid blue, the large French windows between two columns are open on to a wide terrace, beyond which are seen trees in darkness, and distant shapes of lighted houses. On one side is a bay window, over which curtains are partly drawn. Opposite to this window is a door leading into the hall. At an oval rosewood table, set with silver, flowers, fruit, and wine, six people are seated after dinner. Back to the bay window is STEPHEN MORE, *the host, a man of forty, with a fine-cut face, a rather charming smile, and the eyes of an idealist; to his right,* SIR JOHN JULIAN, *an old soldier, with thin brown features, and grey moustaches; to* SIR JOHN'S *right, his brother, the* DEAN OF STOUR, *a tall, dark, ascetic-looking Churchman: to his right* KATHERINE *is leaning forward, her elbows on the table, and her chin on her hands, staring across at her husband; to her right sits* EDWARD MENDIP, *a pale man of forty-five, very bald, with a fine forehead, and on his clear-cut lips a smile that shows his teeth; between him and* MORE *is* HELEN JULIAN,

a pretty dark-haired young woman, absorbed in thoughts of her own. The voices are tuned to the pitch of heated discussion, as the curtain rises.

THE DEAN. I disagree with you, Stephen; absolutely, entirely disagree.

MORE. I can't help it.

MENDIP. Remember a certain war, Stephen! Were your chivalrous notions any good, then? And, what was winked at in an obscure young Member is anathema for an Under Secretary of State. You can't afford——

MORE. To follow my conscience? That's new, Mendip.

MENDIP. Idealism can be out of place, my friend.

THE DEAN. The Government is dealing here with a wild lawless race, on whom I must say I think sentiment is rather wasted.

MORE. God made them, Dean.

MENDIP. I have my doubts.

THE DEAN. They have proved themselves faithless. We have the right to chastise.

MORE. If I hit a little man in the eye, and he hits me back, have I the right to *chastise* him?

SIR JOHN. We didn't begin this business.

MORE. What! With our missionaries and our trading?

THE DEAN. It is news indeed that the work of civilization may be justifiably met by murder. Have you forgotten Glaive and Morlinson?

SIR JOHN. Yes. And that poor fellow Groome and his wife?

MORE. They went into a wild country, against the feeling of the tribes, on their own business. What has the nation to do with the mishaps of gamblers?

SIR JOHN. We can't stand by and see our own flesh and blood ill-treated!

THE DEAN. Does our rule bring blessing—or does it not, Stephen?

MORE. Sometimes; but with all my soul I deny the fantastic superstition that our rule can benefit a people like this, a nation of one race, as different from ourselves as dark from light—in colour, religion, every mortal thing. We can only pervert their natural instincts.

THE DEAN. That to me is an unintelligible point of view.

MENDIP. Go into that philosophy of yours a little deeper, Stephen—it spells stagnation. There are no fixed stars on this earth. Nations *can't* let each other alone.

MORE. Big ones could let little ones alone.

MENDIP. If they could there'd be no big ones. My dear fellow, we know little nations are your hobby, but surely office should have toned you down.

SIR JOHN. I've served my country fifty years, and I say she is not in the wrong.

MORE. I hope to serve her fifty, Sir John, and I say she is.

MENDIP. There are moments when such things can't be said, More.

MORE. They'll be said by me to-night, Mendip.

MENDIP. In the House?

[MORE *nods.*

KATHERINE. Stephen!

MENDIP. Mrs. More, you mustn't let him. It's madness.

MORE. [*Rising*] You can tell people that to-morrow, Mendip. Give it a leader in *The Parthenon.*

MENDIP. Political lunacy! No man in your position has a right to fly out like this at the eleventh hour.

MORE. I've made no secret of my feelings all along. I'm against this war, and against the annexation we all know it will lead to.

MENDIP. My dear fellow! Don't be so Quixotic! We shall have war within the next twenty-four hours, and nothing you can do will stop it.

HELEN. Oh! No!

MENDIP. I'm afraid so, Mrs. Hubert.

SIR JOHN. Not a doubt of it, Helen.

MENDIP. [*To* MORE] And you mean to charge the windmill?

[MORE *nods.*

MENDIP. *C'est magnifique!*

MORE. I'm not out for advertisement.

MENDIP. You will get it!

MORE. Must speak the truth sometimes, even at that risk.

SIR JOHN. It is not the truth.

MENDIP. The greater the truth the greater the libel, and the greater the resentment of the person libelled.

THE DEAN. [*Trying to bring matters to a blander level*] My dear Stephen, even if you were right—which I deny—about the initial merits, there surely comes a point where the individual conscience must resign itself to the country's feeling. This has become a question of national honour.

SIR JOHN. Well said, James!

MORE. Nations are bad judges of their honour, Dean.

THE DEAN. I shall not follow you there.

MORE. No. It's an awkward word.

KATHERINE. [*Stopping* THE DEAN] Uncle James! Please!

[MORE *looks at her intently.*

SIR JOHN. So you're going to put yourself at the head of the cranks, ruin your career, and make me ashamed that you're my son-in-law?

MORE. Is a man only to hold beliefs when they're popular? *You've* stood up to be shot at often enough, Sir John.

SIR JOHN. Never by my country! Your speech will be in all the foreign press—trust 'em for seizing on anything against us. A show-up before other countries——!

MORE. You admit the show-up?

SIR JOHN. I do not, sir.

THE DEAN. The position has become impossible. The state of things out there must be put an end to once for all! Come, Katherine, back us up!

MORE. My country, right or wrong! Guilty—still my country!

MENDIP. That begs the question.

KATHERINE *rises.* THE DEAN, *too, stands up.*

THE DEAN. [*In a low voice*] Quem Deus vult perdere——!

SIR JOHN. Unpatriotic!

MORE. I'll have no truck with tyranny.

KATHERINE. Father doesn't admit tyranny. Nor do any of us, Stephen.

HUBERT JULIAN, *a tall soldier-like man, has come in.*

HELEN. Hubert!

She gets up and goes to him, and they talk together near the door.

SIR JOHN. What in God's name is your idea? We've forborne long enough, in all conscience.

MORE. Sir John, we great Powers have got to change our ways in dealing with weaker nations. The very dogs can give us lessons—watch a big dog with a little one.

MENDIP. No, no, these things are not so simple as all that.

MORE. There's no reason in the world, Mendip, why the rules of chivalry should not apply to nations at least as well as to—dogs.

MENDIP. My dear friend, are you to become that hapless kind of outcast, a champion of lost causes?

MORE. This cause is not lost.

MENDIP. Right or wrong, as lost as ever was cause

in all this world. There was never a time when the word "patriotism" stirred mob sentiment as it does now. 'Ware "Mob," Stephen—'ware "Mob"!

MORE. Because general sentiment's against me, I—a public man—am to deny my faith? The point is not whether I'm right or wrong, Mendip, but whether I'm to sneak out of my conviction because it's unpopular.

THE DEAN. I'm afraid I must go. [*To* KATHERINE] Good-night, my dear! Ah! Hubert! [*He greets* HUBERT] Mr. Mendip, I go your way. Can I drop you?

MENDIP. Thank you. Good-night, Mrs. More. Stop him! It's perdition.

He and THE DEAN *go out.* KATHERINE *puts her arm in* HELEN'S, *and takes her out of the room.* HUBERT *remains standing by the door.*

SIR JOHN. I knew your views were extreme in many ways, Stephen, but I never thought the husband of my daughter would be a Peace-at-any-price man!

MORE. I am not! But I prefer to fight some one my own size.

SIR JOHN. Well! I can only hope to God you'll come to your senses before you commit the folly of this speech. I must get back to the War Office. Good-night, Hubert.

HUBERT. Good-night, Father.

SIR JOHN *goes out.* HUBERT *stands motionless, dejected.*

HUBERT. We've got our orders.

MORE. What? When d'you sail?

HUBERT. At once.

MORE. Poor Helen!

HUBERT. Not married a year; pretty bad luck! [MORE *touches his arm in sympathy*] Well! We've got to put feelings in our pockets. Look here, Stephen—don't make that speech! Think of Katherine—with the Dad at the War Office, and me going out, and Ralph and old George out there already! You can't trust your tongue when you're hot about a thing.

MORE. I must speak, Hubert.

HUBERT. No, no! Bottle yourself up for to-night. The next few hours 'll see it begin. [MORE *turns from him*] If you don't care whether you mess up your own career—don't tear Katherine in two!

MORE. You're not shirking *your* duty because of *your* wife.

HUBERT. Well! You're riding for a fall, and a godless mucker it'll be. This'll be no picnic. We shall get some nasty knocks out there. Wait and see the feeling here when we've had a force or two cut up in those mountains. It's awful country. Those fellows have got modern arms, and are jolly good fighters. Do drop it, Stephen!

MORE. Must risk something, sometimes, Hubert—even in my profession!

[*As he speaks,* KATHERINE *comes in.*

HUBERT. But it's hopeless, my dear chap—absolutely.

MORE *turns to the window,* HUBERT *to his sister —then with a gesture towards* MORE, *as though to leave the matter to her, he goes out.*

KATHERINE. Stephen! Are you really going to speak? [*He nods*] I ask you not.

MORE. You know my feeling.

KATHERINE. But it's our own country. We can't stand apart from it. You won't stop anything—only make people hate you. I can't bear that.

MORE. I tell you, Kit, some one must raise a voice. Two or three reverses—certain to come—and the whole country will go wild. And one more little nation will cease to live.

KATHERINE. If you believe in your country, you must believe that the more land and power she has, the better for the world.

MORE. Is that your faith?

KATHERINE. Yes.

MORE. I respect it; I even understand it; but—I can't hold it.

KATHERINE. But, Stephen, your speech will be a rallying cry to all the cranks, and every one who has a spite against the country. They'll make you their figurehead. [MORE *smiles*] They *will*. Your chance of the Cabinet will go—you may even have to resign your seat.

MORE. Dogs will bark. These things soon blow over.

KATHERINE. No, no! If you once begin a thing, you always go on; and what earthly good?

MORE. History won't say: "And this they did without a single protest from their public men!"

KATHERINE. There are plenty who——

MORE. Poets?

KATHERINE. Do you remember that day on our honeymoon, going up Ben Lawers? You were lying on your face in the heather; you said it was like kissing a loved woman. There was a lark singing—you said that was the voice of one's worship. The hills were very blue; that's why we had blue here, because it was the best dress of our country. You *do* love her.

MORE. Love her!

KATHERINE. You'd have done this for me—then.

MORE. Would you have asked me—then, Kit?

KATHERINE. Yes. The country's *our* country! Oh! Stephen, think what it'll be like for me—with Hubert and the other boys out there. And poor Helen, and Father! I beg you not to make this speech.

MORE. Kit! This isn't fair. Do you want me to feel myself a cur?

KATHERINE. [*Breathless*] I—I—almost feel you'll be a cur to do it [*She looks at him, frightened by her own words. Then, as the footman* HENRY *has come in to clear the table—very low*] I ask you not!

[*He does not answer, and she goes out.*

MORE [*To the servant*] Later, please, Henry, later!

The servant retires. MORE *still stands looking down at the dining-table; then putting his hand to his throat, as if to free it from the grip of his collar, he pours out a glass of water, and drinks it off. In the street, outside the bay window, two street musicians, a harp and a violin, have taken up their stand, and after some twangs and scrapes, break into music.* MORE *goes towards*

the sound, and draws aside one curtain. After a moment, he returns to the table, and takes up the notes of the speech. He is in an agony of indecision.

MORE. A cur!

He seems about to tear his notes across. Then, changing his mind, turns them over and over, muttering. His voice gradually grows louder, till he is declaiming to the empty room the peroration of his speech.

MORE. . . . We have arrogated to our land the title Champion of Freedom, Foe of Oppression. Is that indeed a bygone glory? Is it not worth some sacrifice of our pettier dignity, to avoid laying another stone upon its grave; to avoid placing before the search-light eyes of History the spectacle of yet one more piece of national cynicism? We are about to force our will and our dominion on a race that has always been free, that loves its country, and its independence, as much as ever we love ours. I cannot sit silent to-night and see this begin. As we are tender of our own land, so we should be of the lands of others. I love my country. It is because I love my country that I raise my voice. Warlike in spirit these people may be—but they have no chance against ourselves. And war on such, however agreeable to the blind moment, is odious to the future. The great heart of mankind ever beats in sense and sympathy with the weaker. It is against this great heart of mankind that we are going. In the name of Justice and Civilization we pursue this policy;

but by Justice we shall hereafter be judged, and by Civilization—condemned.

While he is speaking, a little figure has flown along the terrace outside, in the direction of the music, but has stopped at the sound of his voice, and stands in the open window, listening —a dark-haired, dark-eyed child, in a blue dressing-gown caught up in her hand. The street musicians, having reached the end of a tune, are silent.

In the intensity of MORE'S *feeling, a wine-glass, gripped too strongly, breaks and falls in pieces on to a finger-bowl. The child starts forward into the room.*

MORE. Olive!

OLIVE. Who were you speaking to, Daddy?

MORE. [*Staring at her*] The wind, sweetheart!

OLIVE. There isn't any!

MORE. What blew *you* down, then?

OLIVE. [*Mysteriously*] The music. Did the wind break the wine-glass, or did it come in two in your hand?

MORE. Now my sprite! Upstairs again, before Nurse catches you. Fly! Fly!

OLIVE. Oh! no, Daddy! [*With confidential fervour*] It feels like things to-night!

MORE. You're right there!

OLIVE. [*Pulling him down to her, and whispering*] I *must* get back again in secret. H'sh!

She suddenly runs and wraps herself into one of

the curtains of the bay window. A young man enters, with a note in his hand.

MORE. Hallo, Steel!

[*The street musicians have again begun to play.*

STEEL. From Sir John—by special messenger from the War Office.

MORE. [*Reading the note*] "The ball is opened."

He stands brooding over the note, and STEEL *looks at him anxiously. He is a dark, sallow, thin-faced young man, with the eyes of one who can attach himself to people, and suffer with them.*

STEEL. I'm glad it's begun, sir. It would have been an awful pity to have made that speech.

MORE. You too, Steel!

STEEL. I mean, if it's actually started——

MORE. [*Tearing the note across*] Yes. Keep that to yourself.

STEEL. Do you want me any more?

MORE *takes from his breast pocket some papers, and pitches them down on the bureau.*

MORE. Answer these.

STEEL. [*Going to the bureau*] Fetherby was simply sickening. [*He begins to write. Struggle has begun again in* MORE] Not the faintest recognition that there are two sides to it.

MORE *gives him a quick look, goes quietly to the dining-table and picks up his sheaf of notes. Hiding them with his sleeve, he goes back to the window, where he again stands hesitating.*

STEEL. Chief gem: [*Imitating*] "We must show Impudence at last that Dignity is not asleep!"

MORE. [*Moving out on to the terrace*] Nice quiet night!

STELL. This to the Cottage Hospital—shall I say you will preside?

MORE. No.

STEEL writes; then looking up and seeing that MORE *is no longer there, he goes to the window, looks to right and left, returns to the bureau, and is about to sit down again when a thought seems to strike him with consternation. He goes again to the window. Then snatching up his hat, he passes hurriedly out along the terrace. As he vanishes,* KATHERINE *comes in from the hall. After looking out on to the terrace she goes to the bay window; stands there listening; then comes restlessly back into the room.* OLIVE, *creeping quietly from behind the curtain, clasps her round the waist.*

KATHERINE. O my darling! How you startled me! What *are* you doing down here, you wicked little sinner!

OLIVE. I explained all that to Daddy. We needn't go into it again, need we?

KATHERINE. Where *is* Daddy?

OLIVE. Gone.

KATHERINE. When?

OLIVE. Oh! only just, and Mr. Steel went after him like a rabbit. [*The music stops*] They haven't been paid, you know.

KATHERINE. Now, go up at once. I can't think how you got down here.

OLIVE. I can. [*Wheedling*] If you pay them, Mummy, they're sure to play another.

KATHERINE. Well, give them that! One more only.

She gives OLIVE *a coin, who runs with it to the bay window, opens the side casement, and calls to the musicians.*

OLIVE. Catch, please! And would you play just one more?

She returns from the window, and seeing her mother lost in thought, rubs herself against her.

OLIVE. Have you got an ache?

KATHERINE. Right through me, darling!

OLIVE. Oh!

[*The musicians strike up a dance.*

OLIVE. Oh! Mummy! I must just dance!

She kicks off her little blue shoes, and begins dancing. While she is capering HUBERT *comes in from the hall. He stands watching his little niece for a minute, and* KATHERINE *looks at him.*

HUBERT. Stephen gone!

KATHERINE. Yes—stop, Olive!

OLIVE. Are you good at my sort of dancing, Uncle?

HUBERT. Yes, chick—awfully!

KATHERINE. Now, Olive!

The musicians have suddenly broken off in the middle of a bar. From the street comes the noise of distant shouting.

OLIVE. Listen, Uncle! Isn't it a particular noise?

HUBERT *and* KATHERINE *listen with all their might, and* OLIVE *stares at their faces.* HUBERT *goes to the window. The sound comes nearer. The shouted words are faintly heard:* "Pyper—war—our force crosses frontier—sharp fightin' —pyper."

KATHERINE. [*Breathless*] Yes! It is.

The street cry is heard again in two distant voices coming from different directions: "War—pyper —sharp fightin' on the frontier—pyper."

KATHERINE. Shut out those ghouls!

As HUBERT *closes the window,* NURSE WREFORD *comes in from the hall. She is an elderly woman endowed with a motherly grimness. She fixes* OLIVE *with her eye, then suddenly becomes conscious of the street cry.*

NURSE. Oh! don't say it's begun.

[HUBERT *comes from the window.*

NURSE. Is the regiment to go, Mr. Hubert?

HUBERT. Yes, Nanny.

NURSE. Oh, dear! My boy!

KATHERINE. [*Signing to where* OLIVE *stands with wide eyes*] Nurse!

HUBERT. I'll look after him, Nurse.

NURSE. And him keepin' company. And you not married a year. Ah! Mr. Hubert, now do 'ee take care; you and him's both so rash.

HUBERT. Not I, Nurse!

NURSE *looks long into his face, then lifts her finger, and beckons* OLIVE.

OLIVE. [*Perceiving new sensations before her, goes quietly*] Good-night, Uncle! Nanny, d'you know why I was obliged to come down? [*In a fervent whisper*] It's a secret! [*As she passes with* NURSE *out into the hall, her voice is heard saying,* "Do tell me all about the war."]

HUBERT. [*Smothering emotion under a blunt manner*] We sail on Friday, Kit. Be good to Helen, old girl.

KATHERINE. Oh! I wish——! Why—can't—women—fight?

HUBERT. Yes, it's bad for you, with Stephen taking it like this. But he'll come round now it's once begun.

KATHERINE shakes her head, then goes suddenly up to him, and throws her arms round his neck. It is as if all the feeling pent up in her were finding vent in this hug.

The door from the hall is opened, and SIR JOHN'S *voice is heard outside: "All right, I'll find her."*

KATHERINE. Father!

[SIR JOHN *comes in.*

SIR JOHN. Stephen get my note? I sent it over the moment I got to the War Office.

KATHERINE. I expect so. [*Seeing the torn note on the table*] Yes.

SIR JOHN. They're shouting the news now. Thank God, I stopped that crazy speech of his in time.

KATHERINE. Have you stopped it?

SIR JOHN. What! He wouldn't be such a sublime donkey?

KATHERINE. I think that is just what he might be. [*Going to the window*] We shall know soon.

SIR JOHN, *after staring at her, goes up to* HUBERT.

SIR JOHN. Keep a good heart, my boy. The country's first. [*They exchange a hand-squeeze.*]

KATHERINE *backs away from the window.* STEEL *has appeared there from the terrace, breathless from running.*

STEEL. Mr. More back?

KATHERINE. No. Has he spoken?

STEEL. Yes.

KATHERINE. Against?

STEEL. Yes.

SIR JOHN. What? After!

SIR JOHN *stands rigid, then turns and marches straight out into the hall. At a sign from* KATHERINE, HUBERT *follows him.*

KATHERINE. Yes, Mr. Steel?

STEEL. [*Still breathless and agitated*] We were here —he slipped away from me somehow. He must have gone straight down to the House. I ran over, but when I got in under the Gallery he was speaking already. They expected something—I never heard it so still there. He gripped them from the first word—deadly—every syllable. It got some of those fellows. But all the time, under the silence you could feel a—sort of—of—current going round. And then Sherratt —I think it was—began it, and you saw the anger rising in them; but he kept them down—his quietness! The feeling! I've never seen anything like it there.

Then there was a whisper all over the House that fighting had begun. And the whole thing broke out—a regular riot—as if they could have killed him. Some one tried to drag him down by the coat-tails, but he shook him off, and went on. Then he stopped dead and walked out, and the noise dropped like a stone. The whole thing didn't last five minutes. It *was* fine, Mrs. More; like—like lava; he was the only cool person there. I wouldn't have missed it for anything—it was grand!

MORE *has appeared on the terrace, behind* STEEL.

KATHERINE. Good-night, Mr. Steel.

STEEL. [*Startled*] Oh!—Good-night!

He goes out into the hall. KATHERINE *picks up* OLIVE'S *shoes, and stands clasping them to her breast.* MORE *comes in.*

KATHERINE. You've cleared your conscience, then! I didn't think you'd hurt me so.

MORE *does not answer, still living in the scene he has gone through, and* KATHERINE *goes a little nearer to him.*

KATHERINE. I'm with the country, heart and soul, Stephen. I warn you.

While they stand in silence, facing each other, the footman, HENRY, *enters from the hall.*

FOOTMAN. These notes, sir, from the House of Commons.

KATHERINE. [*Taking them*] You can have the room directly.

[*The* FOOTMAN *goes out.*

MORE. Open them!

KATHERINE *opens one after the other, and lets them fall on the table.*

MORE. Well?

KATHERINE. What you might expect. Three of your best friends. It's begun.

MORE. 'Ware Mob! [*He gives a laugh*] I must write to the Chief.

KATHERINE *makes an impulsive movement towards him; then quietly goes to the bureau, sits down and takes up a pen.*

KATHERINE. Let me make the rough draft. [*She waits*] Yes?

MORE. [*Dictating*]

"July 15th.

"DEAR SIR CHARLES,—After my speech to-night, embodying my most unalterable convictions [KATHERINE *turns and looks up at him, but he is staring straight before him, and with a little movement of despair she goes on writing*] I have no alternative but to place the resignation of my Under-Secretaryship in your hands. My view, my faith in this matter may be wrong—but I am surely right to keep the flag of my faith flying. I imagine I need not enlarge on the reasons——"

THE CURTAIN FALLS.

ACT II

Before noon a few days later. The open windows of the dining-room let in the sunlight. On the table a number of newspapers are littered. HELEN *is sitting there, staring straight before her. A newspaper boy runs by outside calling out his wares. At the sound she gets up and goes out on to the terrace.* HUBERT *enters from the hall. He goes at once to the terrace, and draws* HELEN *into the room.*

HELEN. Is it true—what they're shouting?

HUBERT. Yes. Worse than we thought. They got our men all crumpled up in the Pass—guns helpless. Ghastly beginning.

HELEN. Oh, Hubert!

HUBERT. My dearest girl!

HELEN *puts her face up to his. He kisses her. Then she turns quickly into the bay window. The door from the hall has been opened, and the footman,* HENRY, *comes in, preceding* WREFORD *and his sweetheart.*

HENRY. Just wait here, will you, while I let Mrs. More know. [*Catching sight of* HUBERT] Beg pardon, sir!

HUBERT. All right, Henry. [*Off-hand*] Ah! Wreford! [*The* FOOTMAN *withdraws*] So you've brought her

round. That's good! My sister'll look after her—don't you worry! Got everything packed? Three o'clock sharp.

WREFORD. [*A broad-faced soldier, dressed in khaki with a certain look of dry humour, now dimmed—speaking with a West Country burr*] That's right, zurr; all's ready.

HELEN has come out of the window, and is quietly looking at WREFORD *and the girl standing there so awkwardly.*

HELEN. [*Quietly*] Take care of him, Wreford.

HUBERT. We'll take care of each other, won't we, Wreford?

HELEN. How long have you been engaged?

THE GIRL. [*A pretty, indeterminate young woman*] Six months. [*She sobs suddenly.*

HELEN. Ah! He'll soon be safe back.

WREFORD. I'll owe 'em for this. [*In a low voice to her*] Don't 'ee now! Don't 'ee!

HELEN. No! Don't cry, please!

She stands struggling with her own lips, then goes out on to the terrace, HUBERT *following.* WREFORD *and his girl remain where they were, strange and awkward, she muffling her sobs.*

WREFORD. Don't 'ee go on like that, Nance; I'll 'ave to take you 'ome. That's silly, now we've a-come. I might be dead and buried by the fuss you're makin'. You've a-drove the lady away. See!

She regains control of herself as the door is opened and KATHERINE *appears, accompanied by*

OLIVE, *who regards* WREFORD *with awe and curiosity, and by* NURSE, *whose eyes are red, but whose manner is composed.*

KATHERINE. My brother told me; so glad you've brought her.

WREFORD. Ye—as, M'. She feels me goin', a bit.

KATHERINE. Yes, yes! Still, it's for the country, isn't it?

THE GIRL. That's what Wreford keeps tellin' me. He've got to go—so it's no use upsettin' 'im. And of course I keep tellin' him I shall be all right.

NURSE. [*Whose eyes never leave her son's face*] And so you will.

THE GIRL. Wreford thought it 'd comfort him to know you were interested in me. 'E's so 'ot-headed I'm sure somethin' 'll come to 'im.

KATHERINE. We've all got some one going. Are you coming to the docks? We must send them off in good spirits, you know.

OLIVE. Perhaps he'll get a medal.

KATHERINE. Olive!

NURSE. You wouldn't like for him to be hanging back, one of them anti-patriot, stop-the-war ones.

KATHERINE. [*Quickly*] Let me see—I have your address. [*Holding out her hand to* WREFORD] We'll look after her.

OLIVE. [*In a loud whisper*] Shall I lend him my toffee?

KATHERINE. If you like, dear. [*To* WREFORD] Now

take care of my brother and yourself, and we'll take care of her.

WREFORD. Ye—as, M'.

He then looks rather wretchedly at his girl, as if the interview had not done so much for him as he had hoped. She drops a little curtsey. WREFORD *salutes.*

OLIVE. [*Who has taken from the bureau a packet, places it in his hand*] It's very nourishing!

WREFORD. Thank you, miss.

Then, nudging each other, and entangled in their feelings and the conventions, they pass out, shepherded by NURSE.

KATHERINE. Poor things!

OLIVE. What is an anti-patriot, stop-the-war one, Mummy?

KATHERINE. [*Taking up a newspaper*] Just a stupid name, dear—don't chatter!

OLIVE. But tell me just one weeny thing!

KATHERINE. Well?

OLIVE. Is Daddy one?

KATHERINE. Olive! How much do you know about this war?

OLIVE. They won't obey us properly. So we have to beat them, and take away their country. We *shall*, shan't we?

KATHERINE. Yes. But Daddy doesn't want us to; he doesn't think it fair, and he's been saying so. People are very angry with him.

OLIVE. Why isn't it fair? I suppose we're littler than them.

KATHERINE. No.

OLIVE. Oh! in history we always are. And we always win. That's why I like history. Which are *you* for, Mummy—us or them?

KATHERINE. Us.

OLIVE. Then I shall have to be. It's a pity we're not on the same side as Daddy. [KATHERINE *shudders*] Will they hurt him for not taking our side?

KATHERINE. I expect they will, Olive.

OLIVE. Then we shall have to be extra nice to him.

KATHERINE. If we can.

OLIVE. *I* can; I feel like it.

HELEN *and* HUBERT *have returned along the terrace. Seeing* KATHERINE *and the child,* HELEN *passes on, but* HUBERT *comes in at the French window.*

OLIVE. [*Catching sight of him—softly*] Is Uncle Hubert going to the front to-day? [KATHERINE *nods*] But not grandfather?

KATHERINE. No, dear.

OLIVE. That's lucky for *them*, isn't it?

HUBERT *comes in. The presence of the child gives him self-control.*

HUBERT. Well, old girl, it's good-bye. [*To* OLIVE] What shall I bring you back, chick?

OLIVE. Are there shops at the front? I thought it was dangerous.

HUBERT. Not a bit.

OLIVE. [*Disillusioned*] Oh!

KATHERINE. Now, darling, give Uncle a good hug.

Under cover of OLIVE'S *hug,* KATHERINE *repairs her courage.*

KATHERINE. The Dad and I'll be with you all in spirit. Good-bye, old boy!

They do not dare to kiss, and HUBERT *goes out very stiff and straight, in the doorway passing* STEEL, *of whom he takes no notice.* STEEL *hesitates, and would go away.*

KATHERINE. Come in, Mr. Steel.

STEEL. The deputation from Toulmin ought to be here, Mrs. More. It's twelve.

OLIVE. [*Having made a little ball of newspaper—slyly*] Mr. Steel, catch!

[*She throws, and* STEEL *catches it in silence.*

KATHERINE. Go upstairs, won't you, darling?

OLIVE. Mayn't I read in the window, Mummy? Then I shall see if any soldiers pass.

KATHERINE. No. You can go out on the terrace a little, and then you must go up.

[OLIVE *goes reluctantly out on to the terrace.*

STEEL. Awful news this morning of that Pass! And have you seen these? [*Reading from the newspaper*] "We will have no truck with the jargon of the degenerate who vilifies his country at such a moment. The Member for Toulmin has earned for himself the contempt of all virile patriots." [*He takes up a second journal*] "There is a certain type of public man who, even at his own expense, cannot resist the itch to

advertise himself. We would, at moments of national crisis, muzzle such persons, as we muzzle dogs that we suspect of incipient rabies. . . ." They're in full cry after him!

KATHERINE. I mind much more all the creatures who are always flinging mud at the country making him their hero suddenly! You know what's in his mind?

STEEL. Oh! We *must* get him to give up that idea of lecturing everywhere against the war, Mrs. More; we simply must.

KATHERINE. [*Listening*] The deputation's come. Go and fetch him, Mr. Steel. He'll be in his room, at the House.

STEEL *goes out, and* KATHERINE *stands at bay. In a moment he opens the door again, to usher in the deputation; then retires. The four gentlemen have entered as if conscious of grave issues. The first and most picturesque is* JAMES HOME, *a thin, tall, grey-bearded man, with plentiful hair, contradictious eyebrows, and the half-shy, half-bold manners, alternately rude and over-polite, of one not accustomed to Society, yet secretly much taken with himself. He is dressed in rough tweeds, with a red silk tie slung through a ring, and is closely followed by* MARK WACE, *a waxy, round-faced man of middle-age, with sleek dark hair, traces of whisker, and a smooth way of continually rubbing his hands together, as if selling something to an esteemed customer.*

He is rather stout, wears dark clothes, with a large gold chain. Following him comes CHARLES SHELDER, *a lawyer of fifty, with a bald egg-shaped head, and gold pince-nez. He has little side whiskers, a leathery, yellowish skin, a rather kind but watchful and dubious face, and when he speaks seems to have a plum in his mouth, which arises from the preponderance of his shaven upper lip. Last of the deputation comes* WILLIAM BANNING, *an energetic-looking, square-shouldered, self-made country-man, between fifty and sixty, with grey moustaches, ruddy face, and lively brown eyes.*

KATHERINE. How do you do, Mr. Home?

HOME. [*Bowing rather extravagantly over her hand, as if to show his independence of women's influence*] *Mrs.* More! We hardly expected—— This is an honour.

WACE. How do you do, Ma'am?

KATHERINE. And you, Mr. Wace?

WACE. Thank you, Ma'am, well indeed!

SHELDER. How d'you do, Mrs. More?

KATHERINE. Very well, thank you, Mr. Shelder.

BANNING. [*Speaking with a rather broad country accent*] This is but a poor occasion, Ma'am.

KATHERINE. Yes, Mr. Banning. Do sit down, gentlemen.

Seeing that they will not settle down while she is standing, she sits at the table. They gradually take their seats. Each member of the deputation in his own way is severely hanging back

from any mention of the subject in hand; and KATHERINE *as intent on drawing them to it.*

KATHERINE. My husband will be here in two minutes. He's only over at the House.

SHELDER. [*Who is of higher standing and education than the others*] Charming position—this, Mrs. More! So near the—er—Centre of—Gravity—um?

KATHERINE. I read the account of your second meeting at Toulmin.

BANNING. It's bad, Mrs. More—bad. There's no disguising it. That speech was moon-summer madness—Ah! it *was!* Take a lot of explaining away. Why did you let him, now? Why did you? Not your views, I'm sure!

He looks at her, but for answer she only compresses her lips.

BANNING. I tell you what hit me—what's hit the whole constituency—and that's his knowing we were over the frontier, fighting already, when he made it.

KATHERINE. What difference does it make if he did know?

HOME. Hitting below the belt—I should have thought—you'll pardon me!

BANNING. Till war's begun, Mrs. More, you're entitled to say what you like, no doubt—but after! That's going against your country. Ah! his speech was strong, you know—his speech was strong.

KATHERINE. He had made up his mind to speak. It was just an accident the news coming then.

[*A silence.*

BANNING. Well, that's true, I suppose. What we really want is to make sure he won't break out again.

HOME. Very high-minded, his views of course—but, some consideration for the common herd. You'll pardon me!

SHELDER. We've come with the friendliest feelings, Mrs. More—but, you know, it won't do, this sort of thing!

WACE. We shall be able to smooth him down. Oh! surely.

BANNING. We'd be best perhaps not to mention about his knowing that fighting had begun.

As he speaks, MORE *enters through the French windows. They all rise.*

MORE. Good-morning, gentlemen.

He comes down to the table, but does not offer to shake hands.

BANNING. Well, Mr. More? You've made a woeful mistake, sir; I tell you to your face.

MORE. As everybody else does, Banning. Sit down again, please.

They gradually resume their seats, and MORE *sits in* KATHERINE'S *chair. She alone remains standing leaning against the corner of the bay window, watching their faces.*

BANNING. You've seen the morning's telegrams? I tell you, Mr. More—another reverse like that, and the flood will sweep you clean away. And I'll not blame it. It's only flesh and blood.

MORE. Allow for the flesh and blood in *me*, too, please. When I spoke the other night it was not without a certain feeling here. [*He touches his heart.*

BANNING. But your attitude's so sudden—you'd not been going that length when you were down with us in May.

MORE. Do me the justice to remember that even then I was against our policy. It cost me three weeks' hard struggle to make up my mind to that speech. One comes slowly to these things, Banning.

SHELDER. Case of conscience?

MORE. Such things have happened, Shelder, even in politics.

SHELDER. You see, our ideals are naturally low—how different from yours!

[MORE *smiles.*

KATHERINE, *who has drawn near her husband, moves back again, as if relieved at this gleam of geniality.* WACE *rubs his hands.*

BANNING. There's one thing you forget, sir. We send you to Parliament, representing us; but you couldn't find six men in the whole constituency that would have bidden you to make that speech.

MORE. I'm sorry; but I can't help my convictions, Banning.

SHELDER. What was it the prophet was without in his own country?

BANNING. Ah! but we're not funning, Mr. More. I've never known feeling run so high. The sentiment of both meetings was dead against you. We've had

showers of letters to headquarters. Some from very good men—very warm friends of yours.

SHELDER. Come now! It's not too late. Let's go back and tell them you won't do it again.

MORE. Muzzling order?

BANNING. [*Bluntly*] That's about it.

MORE. Give up my principles to save my Parliamentary skin. Then, indeed, they might call me a degenerate! [*He touches the newspapers on the table.*

KATHERINE *makes an abrupt and painful movement, then remains as still as before, leaning against the corner of the window-seat.*

BANNING. Well, well! I know. But we don't ask you to take your words back—we only want discretion in the future.

MORE. Conspiracy of silence! And have it said that a mob of newspapers have hounded me to it.

BANNING. They won't say that of *you.*

SHELDER. My dear More, aren't you rather dropping to our level? With your principles you ought not to care two straws what people say.

MORE. But I do. I can't betray the dignity and courage of public men. If popular opinion is to control the utterances of her politicians, then good-bye indeed to this country!

BANNING. Come now! I won't say that your views weren't sound enough before the fighting began. I've never liked our policy out there. But our blood's being spilled; and that makes all the difference. I don't suppose they'd want me exactly, but I'd be ready

to go myself. We'd all of us be ready. And we can't have the man that represents us talking wild, until we've licked these fellows. That's it in a nutshell.

MORE. I understand your feeling, Banning. I tender you my resignation. I can't and won't hold on where I'm not wanted.

BANNING. No, no, no! Don't do that! [*His accent broader and broader*] You've 'ad your say, and there it is. Coom now! You've been our Member nine years, in rain and shine.

SHELDER. We want to keep you, More. Come! Give us your promise—that's a good man!

MORE. I don't make cheap promises. You ask too much.

[*There is silence, and they all look at* MORE.

SHELDER. There are very excellent reasons for the Government's policy.

MORE. There are always excellent reasons for having your way with the weak.

SHELDER. My dear More, how can you get up any enthusiasm for those cattle-lifting ruffians?

MORE. Better lift cattle than lift freedom.

SHELDER. Well, all we'll ask is that you shouldn't go about the country, saying so.

MORE. But that is just what I must do.

[*Again they all look at* MORE *in consternation.*

HOME. Not down our way, you'll pardon me.

WACE. Really—really, sir——

SHELDER. The time of crusades is past, More.

MORE. Is it?

BANNING. Ah! no, but we don't want to part with you, Mr. More. It's a bitter thing, this, after three elections. Look at the 'uman side of it! To speak ill of your country when there's been a disaster like this terrible business in the Pass. There's your own wife. I see her brother's regiment's to start this very afternoon. Come now—how must she feel?

MORE *breaks away to the bay window. The* DEPUTATION *exchange glances.*

MORE. [*Turning*] To try to muzzle me like this—is going too far.

BANNING. We just want to put you out of temptation.

MORE. I've held my seat with you in all weathers for nine years. You've all been bricks to me. My heart's in my work, Banning; I'm not eager to undergo political eclipse at forty.

SHELDER. Just so—we don't want to see you in that quandary.

BANNING. It'd be no friendliness to give you a wrong impression of the state of feeling. Silence—till the bitterness is overpast; there's naught else for it, Mr. More, while you feel as you do. That tongue of yours! Come! You owe us something. You're a big man; it's the big view you ought to take.

MORE. I am trying to.

HOME. And what precisely is your view—you'll pardon my asking?

MORE. [*Turning on him*] Mr. Home—a great country such as ours—is trustee for the highest sentiments

of mankind. Do these few outrages justify us in stealing the freedom of this little people?

BANNING. Steal their freedom! That's rather running before the hounds.

MORE. Ah, Banning! now we come to it. In your hearts you're none of you for that—neither by force nor fraud. And yet you all know that we've gone in there to stay, as we've gone into other lands—as all we big Powers go into other lands, when they're little and weak. The Prime Minister's words the other night were these: "If we are forced to spend this blood and money now, we must never again be forced." What does that mean but swallowing this country?

SHELDER. Well, and quite frankly, it'd be no bad thing.

HOME. We don't want their wretched country—we're forced.

MORE. We are *not* forced.

SHELDER. My dear More, what is civilization but the logical, inevitable swallowing up of the lower by the higher types of man? And what else will it be here?

MORE. We shall not agree there, Shelder; and we might argue it all day. But the point is, not whether you or I are right—the point is: What is a man who holds a faith with all his heart to do? Please tell me.

[*There is a silence.*

BANNING. [*Simply*] I was just thinkin' of those poor fellows in the Pass.

MORE. I can see them, as well as you, Banning.

But, imagine! Up in our own country—the Black Valley—twelve hundred foreign devils dead and dying —the crows busy over them—in our own country, our own valley—ours—ours—violated. Would you care about "the poor fellows" in *that* Pass?—Invading, stealing dogs! Kill them—kill them! You would, and I would, too!

The passion of those words touches and grips as no arguments could; and they are silent.

MORE. Well! What's the difference out there? I'm not so inhuman as not to want to see this disaster in the Pass wiped out. But once that's done, in spite of my affection for you; my ambitions, and they're not few; [*Very low*] in spite of my own wife's feeling, I must be free to raise my voice against this war.

BANNING. [*Speaking slowly, consulting the others, as it were, with his eyes*] Mr. More, there's no man I respect more than yourself. I can't tell what they'll say down there when we go back; but I, for one, don't feel it in me to take a hand in pressing you farther against your faith.

SHELDER. We don't deny that—that you have a case of sorts.

WACE. No—surely.

SHELDER. A man should be free, I suppose, to hold his own opinions.

MORE. Thank you, Shelder.

BANNING. Well! well! We must take you as you are; but it's a rare pity; there'll be a lot of trouble——

His eyes light on HOME, *who is leaning forward*

with hand raised to his ear, listening. Very faint, from far in the distance, there is heard a skirling sound. All become conscious of it, all listen.

HOME. [*Suddenly*] Bagpipes!

The figure of OLIVE *flies past the window, out on the terrace.* KATHERINE *turns, as if to follow her.*

SHELDER. Highlanders! [*He rises.*

KATHERINE *goes quickly out on to the terrace. One by one they all follow to the window. One by one go out on to the terrace, till* MORE *is left alone. He turns to the bay window. The music is swelling, coming nearer.* MORE *leaves the window—his face distorted by the strife of his emotions. He paces the room, taking, in some sort, the rhythm of the march.*

Slowly the music dies away in the distance to a drum-tap and the tramp of a company. MORE *stops at the table, covering his eyes with his hands.*

The DEPUTATION *troop back across the terrace, and come in at the French windows. Their faces and manners have quite changed.* KATHERINE *follows them as far as the window.*

HOME. [*In a strange, almost threatening voice*] It won't do, Mr. More. Give us your word, to hold your peace!

SHELDER. Come! More.

WACE. Yes, indeed—indeed!

BANNING. We must have it.

MORE. [*Without lifting his head*] I—I——

The drum-tap of a regiment marching is heard.

BANNING. Can you hear that go by, man—when your country's just been struck?

Now comes the scuffle and mutter of a following crowd.

MORE. I give you——

Then, sharp and clear above all other sounds, the words: "Give the beggars hell, boys!" "Wipe your feet on their dirty country!" "Don't leave 'em a gory acre!" *And a burst of hoarse cheering.*

MORE. [*Flinging up his head*] That's reality! By Heaven! No!

KATHERINE. Oh!

SHELDER. In that case, we'll go.

BANNING. You mean it? You lose us, then!

[MORE *bows.*

HOME. Good riddance [*Venomously—his eyes darting between* MORE *and* KATHERINE]! Go and stump the country! Find out what they think of you! You'll pardon me!

One by one, without a word, only BANNING *looking back, they pass out into the hall.* MORE *sits down at the table before the pile of newspapers.* KATHERINE, *in the window, never moves.* OLIVE *comes along the terrace to her mother.*

OLIVE. They *were* nice ones! Such a lot of dirty people following, and some quite clean, Mummy. [*Con-*

scious from her mother's face that something is very wrong, she looks at her father, and then steals up to his side] Uncle Hubert's gone, Daddy; and Auntie Helen's crying. And—look at Mummy!

[MORE *raises his head and looks.*

OLIVE. Do be on our side! Do!

She rubs her cheek against his. Feeling that he does not rub his cheek against hers, OLIVE *stands away, and looks from him to her mother in wonder.*

THE CURTAIN FALLS

ACT III

SCENE I

A cobble-stoned alley, without pavement, behind a suburban theatre. The tall, blind, dingy-yellowish wall of the building is plastered with the tattered remnants of old entertainment bills, and the words: "To Let," and with several torn, and one still virgin placard, containing this announcement: "Stop-the-War Meeting, October 1st. Addresses by STEPHEN MORE, Esq., *and others." The alley is plentifully strewn with refuse and scraps of paper. Three stone steps, inset, lead to the stage door. It is a dark night, and a street lamp close to the wall throws all the light there is. A faint, confused murmur, as of distant hooting is heard. Suddenly a boy comes running, then two rough girls hurry past in the direction of the sound; and the alley is again deserted. The stage door opens, and a doorkeeper, poking his head out, looks up and down. He withdraws, but in a second reappears, preceding three black-coated gentlemen.*

DOORKEEPER. It's all clear. You can get away down here, gentlemen. Keep to the left, then sharp to the right, round the corner.

THE THREE. [*Dusting themselves, and settling their ties*] Thanks, very much! Thanks!

FIRST BLACK-COATED GENTLEMAN. Where's More? Isn't he coming?

They are joined by a fourth black-coated GENTLEMAN.

FOURTH BLACK-COATED GENTLEMAN. Just behind. [*To the* DOORKEEPER] Thanks.

They hurry away. The DOORKEEPER *retires. Another boy runs past. Then the door opens again.* STEEL *and* MORE *come out.*

MORE *stands hesitating on the steps; then turns as if to go back.*

STEEL. Come along, sir, come!

MORE. It sticks in my gizzard, Steel.

STEEL. [*Running his arm through* MORE'S, *and almost dragging him down the steps*] You owe it to the theatre people. [MORE *still hesitates*] We might be penned in there another hour; you told Mrs. More half-past ten; it'll only make her anxious. And she hasn't seen you for six weeks.

MORE. All right; don't dislocate my arm.

They move down the steps, and away to the left, as a boy comes running down the alley. Sighting MORE, *he stops dead, spins round, and crying shrilly:* "'Ere 'e is! That's 'im! 'Ere 'e is!" *he bolts back in the direction whence he came.*

STEEL. Quick, sir, quick!

MORE. That is the end of the limit, as the foreign ambassador remarked.

STEEL. [*Pulling him back towards the door*] Well! come inside again, anyway!

A number of men and boys, and a few young girls, are trooping quickly from the left. A motley crew, out for excitement; loafers, artisans, navvies; girls, rough or dubious. All in the mood of hunters, and having tasted blood. They gather round the steps displaying the momentary irresolution and curiosity that follows on a new development of any chase. MORE, *on the bottom step, turns and eyes them.*

A GIRL [*At the edge*] Which is 'im! The old 'un or the young?

[MORE *turns, and mounts the remaining steps.*

TALL YOUTH. [*With lank black hair under a bowler hat*] You blasted traitor!

MORE *faces round at the volley of jeering that follows; the chorus of booing swells, then gradually dies, as if they realized that they were spoiling their own sport.*

A ROUGH GIRL. Don't frighten the poor feller!

[*A girl beside her utters a shrill laugh.*

STEEL. [*Tugging at* MORE'S *arm*] Come along, sir.

MORE. [*Shaking his arm free—to the crowd*] Well, what do you want?

A VOICE. Speech.

MORE. Indeed! That's new.

ROUGH VOICE. [*At the back of the crowd*] Look at his white liver. You can see it in his face.

A BIG NAVVY. [*In front*] Shut it! Give 'im a chanst!

TALL YOUTH. Silence for the blasted traitor?

A youth plays the concertina; there is laughter, then an abrupt silence.

MORE. You shall have it in a nutshell!

A SHOPBOY. [*Flinging a walnut-shell which strikes* MORE *on the shoulder*] Here y'are!

MORE. Go home, and think! If foreigners invaded *us*, wouldn't you be fighting tooth and nail like those tribesmen, out there?

TALL YOUTH. Treacherous dogs! Why don't they come out in the open?

MORE. They fight the best way they can.

A burst of hooting is led by a soldier in khaki on the outskirts.

MORE. My friend there in khaki led that hooting. I've never said a word against our soldiers. It's the Government I condemn for putting them to this, and the Press for hounding on the Government, and all of you for being led by the nose to do what none of you would do, left to yourselves.

The TALL YOUTH *leads a somewhat unspontaneous burst of execration.*

MORE. I say not one of you would go for a weaker man.

VOICES IN THE CROWD.

ROUGH VOICE. Tork sense!

GIRL'S VOICE. He's gittin' at you!

TALL YOUTH'S VOICE. Shiny skunk!

A NAVVY. [*Suddenly shouldering forward*] Look 'ere, Mister! Don't you come gaffin' to those who've got mates out there, or it'll be the worse for you—you go 'ome!

COCKNEY VOICE. And git your wife to put cotton-wool in yer ears.

[*A spurt of laughter.*

A FRIENDLY VOICE. [*From the outskirts*] Shame! there! Bravo, More! Keep it up!

[*A scuffle drowns this cry.*

MORE. [*With vehemence*] Stop that! Stop that! You——!

TALL YOUTH. Traitor!

AN ARTISAN. Who black-legged?

MIDDLE-AGED MAN. Ought to be shot—backin' his country's enemies!

MORE. Those tribesmen are defending their homes.

TWO VOICES. Hear! hear!

[*They are hustled into silence.*

TALL YOUTH. Wind-bag!

MORE. [*With sudden passion*] Defending their homes! Not mobbing unarmed men!

[STEEL *again pulls at his arm.*

ROUGH. Shut it, or we'll do you in!

MORE. [*Recovering his coolness*] Ah! Do me in by all means! You'd deal such a blow at cowardly mobs as wouldn't be forgotten in your time.

STEEL. For God's sake, sir!

MORE. [*Shaking off his touch*] Well!

There is an ugly rush, checked by the fall of the foremost figures, thrown too suddenly against the bottom step. The crowd recoils.

There is a momentary lull, and MORE *stares steadily down at them.*

COCKNEY VOICE. Don't 'e speak well! What eloquence!

Two or three nutshells and a piece of orange-peel strike MORE *across the face. He takes no notice.*

ROUGH VOICE. That's it! Give 'im some encouragement.

The jeering laughter is changed to anger by the contemptuous smile on MORE'S *face.*

A TALL YOUTH. Traitor!

A VOICE. Don't stand there like a stuck pig.

A ROUGH. Let's 'ave 'im dahn off that!

Under cover of the applause that greets this, he strikes MORE *across the legs with a belt.* STEEL *starts forward.* MORE, *flinging out his arm, turns him back, and resumes his tranquil staring at the crowd, in whom the sense of being foiled by this silence is fast turning to rage.*

THE CROWD. Speak up, or get down! Get off! Get away, there—or we'll make you! Go on!

[MORE *remains immovable.*

A YOUTH. [*In a lull of disconcertion*] I'll make 'im speak! See!

He darts forward and spits, defiling MORE'S *hand.* MORE *jerks it up as if it had been stung, then stands as still as ever. A spurt of laughter dies into a shiver of repugnance at the action. The shame is fanned again to fury by the sight of* MORE'S *scornful face.*

TALL YOUTH. [*Out of murmuring*] Shift! or you'll get it!

A VOICE. Enough of your ugly mug!

A ROUGH. Give 'im one!

Two flung stones strike MORE. *He staggers and nearly falls, then rights himself.*

A GIRL'S VOICE. Shame!

FRIENDLY VOICE. Bravo, More! Stick to it!

A ROUGH. Give 'im another!

A VOICE. No!

A GIRL'S VOICE. Let 'im alone! Come on, Billy, this ain't no fun!

Still looking up at MORE, *the whole crowd falls into an uneasy silence, broken only by the shuffling of feet. Then the* BIG NAVVY *in the front rank turns and elbows his way out to the edge of the crowd.*

THE NAVVY. Let 'im be!

With half-sullen and half-shamefaced acquiescence the crowd breaks up and drifts back whence it came, till the alley is nearly empty.

MORE. [*As if coming to, out of a trance—wiping his hand and dusting his coat*] Well, Steel!

And followed by STEEL, *he descends the steps and moves away. Two policemen pass glancing up at the broken glass. One of them stops and makes a note.*

THE CURTAIN FALLS.

SCENE II

The window-end of KATHERINE'S *bedroom, panelled in cream-coloured wood. The light from four candles is falling on* KATHERINE, *who is sitting before the silver mirror of an old oak dressing-table, brushing her hair. A door, on the left, stands ajar. An oak chair against the wall close to a recessed window is all the other furniture. Through this window the blue night is seen, where a mist is rolled out flat amongst trees, so that only dark clumps of boughs show here and there, beneath a moonlit sky. As the curtain rises,* KATHERINE, *with brush arrested, is listening. She begins again brushing her hair, then stops, and taking a packet of letters from a drawer of her dressing-table, reads. Through the just open door behind her comes the voice of* OLIVE.

OLIVE. Mummy! I'm awake!

But KATHERINE *goes on reading; and* OLIVE *steals into the room in her nightgown.*

OLIVE. [*At* KATHERINE'S *elbow—examining her watch on its stand*] It's fourteen minutes to eleven.

KATHERINE. Olive, Olive!

OLIVE. I just wanted to see the time. I never can go to sleep if I try—it's quite helpless, you know. Is there a victory yet? [KATHERINE *shakes her head*] Oh! I prayed extra special for one in the evening papers. [*Straying round her mother*] Hasn't Daddy come?

KATHERINE. Not yet.

OLIVE. Are you waiting for him? [*Burying her face in her mother's hair*] Your hair *is* nice, Mummy. It's particular to-night.

KATHERINE *lets fall her brush, and looks at her almost in alarm.*

OLIVE. How long has Daddy been away?

KATHERINE. Six weeks.

OLIVE. It seems about a hundred years, doesn't it? Has he been making speeches all the time?

KATHERINE. Yes.

OLIVE. To-night, too?

KATHERINE. Yes.

OLIVE. The night that man was here whose head's too bald for anything—oh! Mummy, you know—the one who cleans his teeth so termendously—I heard Daddy making a speech to the wind. It broke a wine-glass. His speeches must be good ones, mustn't they!

KATHERINE. Very.

OLIVE. It felt funny; you couldn't see any wind, you know.

KATHERINE. Talking to the wind is an expression, Olive.

OLIVE. Does Daddy often?

KATHERINE. Yes, nowadays.

OLIVE. What does it mean?

KATHERINE. Speaking to people who won't listen.

OLIVE. What do they do, then?

KATHERINE. Just a few people go to hear him, and then a great crowd comes and breaks in; or they wait for him outside, and throw things, and hoot.

OLIVE. Poor Daddy! Is it people on our side who throw things?

KATHERINE. Yes, but only rough people.

OLIVE. Why does he go on doing it? I shouldn't.

KATHERINE. He thinks it is his duty.

OLIVE. To your neighbour, or only to God?

KATHERINE. To both.

OLIVE. Oh! Are those his letters?

KATHERINE. Yes.

OLIVE. [*Reading from the letter*] "My dear Heart." Does he always call you his dear heart, Mummy? It's rather jolly, isn't it? "I shall be home about half-past ten to-morrow night. For a few hours the fires of p-u-r-g-a-t-o-r-y will cease to burn——" What are the fires of p-u-r-g-a-t-o-r-y?

KATHERINE. [*Putting away the letters*] Come, Olive!

OLIVE. But what are they?

KATHERINE. Daddy means that he's been very unhappy.

OLIVE. Have you, too?

KATHERINE. Yes.

OLIVE. [*Cheerfully*] So have I. May I open the window?

KATHERINE. No; you'll let the mist in.

OLIVE. Isn't it a funny mist—all flat!

KATHERINE. Now, come along, frog!

OLIVE. [*Making time*] Mummy, when is Uncle Hubert coming back?

KATHERINE. We don't know, dear.

OLIVE. I suppose Auntie Helen'll stay with us till he does.

KATHERINE. Yes.

OLIVE. That's something, isn't it?

KATHERINE. [*Picking her up*] Now then!

OLIVE. [*Deliciously limp*] Had I better put in the duty to your neighbour—if there isn't a victory soon? [*As they pass through the door*] You're tickling under my knee! [*Little gurgles of pleasure follow. Then silence. Then a drowsy voice*] I *must* keep awake for Daddy.

KATHERINE *comes back. She is about to leave the door a little open, when she hears a knock on the other door. It is opened a few inches, and* NURSE'S *voice says:* "Can I come in, Ma'am?" *The* NURSE *comes in.*

KATHERINE. [*Shutting* OLIVE'S *door, and going up to her*] What is it, Nurse?

NURSE. [*Speaking in a low voice*] I've been meaning to—I'll never do it in the daytime. I'm giving you notice.

KATHERINE. Nurse! *You too!*

She looks towards OLIVE'S *room with dismay. The* NURSE *smudges a slow tear away from her cheek.*

NURSE. I want to go right away at once.

KATHERINE. Leave Olive! That *is* the sins of the fathers with a vengeance.

NURSE. I've had another letter from my son. No, Miss Katherine, while the master goes on upholdin' these murderin' outlandish creatures, I can't live in this house, not now he's coming back.

KATHERINE. But, Nurse——!

NURSE. It's not like them [*With an ineffable gesture*] downstairs, because I'm frightened of the mob, or of the window's bein' broke again, or mind what the boys in the street say. I should think not—no! It's my heart. I'm sore night and day thinkin' of my son, and him lying out there at night without a rag of dry clothing, and water that the bullocks won't drink, and maggots in the meat; and every day one of his friends laid out stark and cold, and one day—'imself perhaps. If anything were to 'appen to him, I'd never forgive meself—here. Ah! Miss Katherine, I wonder how you bear it—bad news comin' every day— And Sir John's face so sad— And all the time the master speaking against us, as it might be Jonah 'imself.

KATHERINE. But, Nurse, how *can* you leave us, *you?*

NURSE. [*Smudging at her cheeks*] There's that tells me it's encouragin' something to happen, if I stay here;

and Mr. More coming back to-night. You can't serve God and Mammon, the Bible says.

KATHERINE. Don't you know what it's costing him?

NURSE. Ah! Cost him his seat, and his reputation; and more than that it'll cost him, to go against the country.

KATHERINE. He's following his conscience.

NURSE. And others must follow theirs, too. No, Miss Katherine, for you to let him—you, with your three brothers out there, and your father fair wasting away with grief. Sufferin' too as you've been these three months past. What'll you feel if anything happens to my three young gentlemen out there, to my dear Mr. Hubert that I nursed myself, when your precious mother couldn't? What would she have said —with you in the camp of his enemies?

KATHERINE. Nurse, Nurse!

NURSE. In my paper they say he's encouraging these heathens and makin' the foreigners talk about us; and every day longer the war lasts, there's our blood on this house.

KATHERINE. [*Turning away*] Nurse, I can't—I won't listen.

NURSE. [*Looking at her intently*] Ah! You'll move him to leave off! I see your heart, my dear. But if you don't, then go I must!

She nods her head gravely, goes to the door of OLIVE'S *room, opens it gently, stands looking for a moment, then with the words* "My Lamb!" *she goes in noiselessly and closes the door.*

KATHERINE *turns back to her glass, puts back her hair, and smooths her lips and eyes. The door from the corridor is opened, and* HELEN'S *voice says:* "Kit! You're not in bed?"

KATHERINE. No.

HELEN *too is in a wrapper, with a piece of lace thrown over her head. Her face is scared and miserable, and she runs into* KATHERINE'S *arms.*

KATHERINE. My dear, what is it?

HELEN. I've seen—a vision!

KATHERINE. Hssh! You'll wake Olive!

HELEN. [*Staring before her*] I'd just fallen asleep, and I saw a plain that seemed to run into the sky—like—that fog. And on it there were—dark things. One grew into a body without a head, and a gun by its side. And one was a man sitting huddled up, nursing a wounded leg. He had the face of Hubert's servant, Wreford. And then I saw—Hubert. His face was all dark and thin; and he had—a wound, an awful wound here [*She touches her breast*]. The blood was running from it, and he kept trying to stop it—oh! Kit—by kissing it [*She pauses, stifled by emotion*]. Then I heard Wreford laugh, and say vultures didn't touch live bodies. And there came a voice, from somewhere, calling out: "Oh! God! I'm dying!" And Wreford began to swear at it, and I heard Hubert say: "Don't, Wreford; let the poor fellow be!" But the voice went on and on, moaning and crying out: "I'll lie here all night dying—and then I'll die!" And

Wreford dragged himself along the ground; his face all devilish, like a man who's going to kill.

KATHERINE. My dear! How ghastly!

HELEN. Still that voice went on, and I saw Wreford take up the dead man's gun. Then Hubert got upon his feet, and went tottering along, so feebly, so dreadfully—but before he could reach and stop him, Wreford fired at the man who was crying. And Hubert called out: "You brute!" and fell right down. And when Wreford saw him lying there, he began to moan and sob, but Hubert never stirred. Then it all got black again—and I could see a dark woman-thing creeping, first to the man without a head; then to Wreford; then to Hubert, and it touched him, and sprang away. And it cried out: "A—ai—ah!" [*Pointing out at the mist*] Look! Out there! The dark things!

KATHERINE. [*Putting her arms round her*] Yes, dear, yes! You must have been looking at the mist.

HELEN. [*Strangely calm*] He's dead!

KATHERINE. It was only a dream.

HELEN. You didn't hear that cry. [*She listens*] That's Stephen. Forgive me, Kit; I oughtn't to have upset you, but I couldn't help coming.

She goes out. KATHERINE, *into whom her emotion seems to have passed, turns feverishly to the window, throws it open and leans out.* MORE *comes in.*

MORE. Kit!

Catching sight of her figure in the window, he goes quickly to her.

KATHERINE. Ah! [*She has mastered her emotion.*

MORE. Let me look at you!

He draws her from the window to the candle-light, and looks long at her.

MORE. What have you done to your hair?

KATHERINE. Nothing.

MORE. It's wonderful to-night.

He takes it greedily and buries his face in it.

KATHERINE. [*Drawing her hair away*] Well?

MORE. At last!

KATHERINE. [*Pointing to* OLIVE'S *room*] Hssh!

MORE. How is she?

KATHERINE. All right.

MORE. And you?

[KATHERINE *shrugs her shoulders.*

MORE. Six weeks!

KATHERINE. Why have you come?

MORE. Why!

KATHERINE. You begin again the day after to-morrow. Was it worth while?

MORE. Kit!

KATHERINE. It makes it harder for me, that's all.

MORE. [*Staring at her*] What's come to you?

KATHERINE. Six weeks is a long time to sit and read about your meetings.

MORE. Put that away to-night. [*He touches her*] This is what travellers feel when they come out of the desert to—water.

KATHERINE. [*Suddenly noticing the cut on his forehead*] Your forehead! It's cut.

MORE. It's nothing.

KATHERINE. Oh! Let me bathe it!

MORE. No, dear! It's all right.

KATHERINE. [*Turning away*] Helen has just been telling me a dream she's had of Hubert's death.

MORE. Poor child!

KATHERINE. Dream bad dreams, and wait, and hide oneself—there's been nothing else to do. Nothing, Stephen—nothing!

MORE. Hide? Because of me?

[KATHERINE *nods.*

MORE. [*With a movement of distress*] I see. I thought from your letters you were coming to feel—. Kit! You look so lovely!

Suddenly he sees that she is crying, and goes quickly to her.

MORE. My dear, don't cry! God knows I don't want to make things worse for you. I'll go away.

She draws away from him a little, and after looking long at her, he sits down at the dressing-table and begins turning over the brushes and articles of toilet, trying to find words.

MORE. Never look forward. After the time I've had—I thought—to-night—it would be summer—I thought it would be you—and everything!

While he is speaking KATHERINE *has stolen closer. She suddenly drops on her knees by his side and wraps his hand in her hair. He turns and clasps her.*

MORE. Kit!

KATHERINE. Ah! yes! But—to-morrow it begins again. Oh! Stephen! How long—how long am I to

be torn in two? [*Drawing back in his arms*] I can't—can't bear it.

MORE. My darling!

KATHERINE. Give it up! For my sake! Give it up! [*Pressing closer to him*] It shall be me—and everything——

MORE. God!

KATHERINE. It *shall* be—if—if——

MORE. [*Aghast*] You're not making terms? Bargaining? For God's sake, Kit!

KATHERINE. For God's sake, Stephen!

MORE. You!—of all people—you!

KATHERINE. Stephen!

For a moment MORE *yields utterly, then shrinks back.*

MORE. A bargain! It's selling my soul!

He struggles out of her arms, gets up, and stands without speaking, staring at her, and wiping the sweat from his forehead. KATHERINE *remains some seconds on her knees, gazing up at him, not realizing. Then her head droops; she too gets up and stands apart, with her wrapper drawn close round her. It is as if a cold and deadly shame had come to them both. Quite suddenly* MORE *turns, and, without looking back, feebly makes his way out of the room. When he is gone* KATHERINE *drops on her knees and remains there motionless, huddled in her hair.*

THE CURTAIN FALLS

ACT IV

It is between lights, the following day, in the dining-room of MORE'S *house. The windows are closed, but curtains are not drawn.* STEEL *is seated at the bureau, writing a letter from* MORE'S *dictation.*

STEEL. [*Reading over the letter*] "No doubt we shall have trouble. But, if the town authorities at the last minute forbid the use of the hall, we'll hold the meeting in the open. Let bills be got out, and an audience will collect in any case."

MORE. They will.

STEEL. "Yours truly"; I've signed for you.

[MORE *nods.*

STEEL. [*Blotting and enveloping the letter*] You know the servants have all given notice—except Henry.

MORE. Poor Henry!

STEEL. It's partly nerves, of course—the windows have been broken twice—but it's partly——

MORE. Patriotism. Quite! they'll do the next smashing themselves. That reminds me—to-morrow *you* begin holiday, Steel.

STEEL. Oh, no!

MORE. My dear fellow—yes. Last night ended your sulphur cure. Truly sorry ever to have let you in for it.

STEEL. Some one must do the work. You're half dead as it is.

MORE. There's lots of kick in me.

STEEL. Give it up, sir. The odds are too great. It isn't worth it.

MORE. To fight to a finish; knowing you must be beaten—is anything better worth it?

STEEL. Well, then, I'm not going.

MORE. This is my private hell, Steel; you don't roast in it any longer. Believe me, it's a great comfort to hurt no one but yourself.

STEEL. I *can't* leave you, sir.

MORE. My dear boy, you're a brick—but we've got off by a miracle so far, and I can't have the responsibility of you any longer. Hand me over that correspondence about to-morrow's meeting.

STEEL takes some papers from his pocket, but does not hand them.

MORE. Come! [*He stretches out his hand for the papers. As* STEEL *still draws back, he says more sharply*] Give them to me, Steel! [STEEL *hands them over*] Now, that ends it, d'you see?

They stand looking at each other; then STEEL, *very much upset, turns and goes out of the room.* MORE, *who has watched him with a sorry smile, puts the papers into a dispatch-case. As he is closing the bureau, the footman* HENRY *enters, announcing:* "Mr. Mendip, sir." MENDIP *comes in, and the* FOOTMAN *withdraws.* MORE *turns to his visitor, but does not hold out his hand.*

MENDIP. [*Taking* MORE'S *hand*] Give me credit for a little philosophy, my friend. Mrs. More told me you'd be back to-day. Have you heard?

MORE. What?

MENDIP. There's been a victory.

MORE. Thank God!

MENDIP. Ah! So you actually are flesh and blood.

MORE. Yes!

MENDIP. Take off the martyr's shirt, Stephen. You're only flouting human nature.

MORE. So—even you defend the mob!

MENDIP. My dear fellow, you're up against the strongest common instinct in the world. What do you expect? That the man in the street should be a Quixote? That his love of country should express itself in philosophic altruism? What on earth do you expect? Men are very simple creatures; and Mob is just conglomerate essence of simple men.

MORE. Conglomerate *ex*crescence. Mud of street and market-place gathered in a torrent—This blind howling "patriotism"—what each man feels in here? [*He touches his breast*] No!

MENDIP. You think men go beyond instinct—they don't. All they know is that something's hurting that image of themselves that they call country. They just feel something big and religious, and go it blind.

MORE. This used to be the country of free speech. It used to be the country where a man was expected to hold to his faith.

MENDIP. There are limits to human nature, Stephen.

MORE. Let no man stand to his guns in face of popular attack. Still your advice, is it?

MENDIP. My advice is: Get out of town at once. The torrent you speak of will be let loose the moment this news is out. Come, my dear fellow, don't stay here!

MORE. Thanks! I'll see that Katherine and Olive go.

MENDIP. Go with them! If your cause is lost, that's no reason why *you* should be.

MORE. There's the comfort of not running away. And—I want comfort.

MENDIP. This is bad, Stephen; bad, foolish—foolish. Well! I'm going to the House. This way?

MORE. Down the steps, and through the gate. Good-bye?

KATHERINE *has come in followed by* NURSE, *hatted and cloaked, with a small bag in her hand.* KATHERINE *takes from the bureau a cheque which she hands to the* NURSE. MORE *comes in from the terrace.*

MORE. You're wise to go, Nurse.

NURSE. You've treated my poor dear badly, sir. Where's your heart?

MORE. In full use.

NURSE. On those heathens. Don't your own hearth and home come first? Your wife, that was born in time of war, with her own father fighting, and her grandfather killed for his country. A bitter thing,

to have the windows of her house broken, and be pointed at by the boys in the street.

MORE *stands silent under this attack, looking at his wife.*

KATHERINE. Nurse!

NURSE. It's unnatural, sir—what you're doing! To think more of those savages than of your own wife! Look at her! Did you ever see her look like that? Take care, sir, before it's too late!

MORE. Enough, please!

NURSE *stands for a moment doubtful; looks long at* KATHERINE; *then goes.*

MORE. [*Quietly*] There has been a victory.

[*He goes out.*

KATHERINE *is breathing fast, listening to the distant hum and stir rising in the street. She runs to the window as the footman,* HENRY, *entering, says:* "Sir John Julian, Ma'am!" SIR JOHN *comes in, a newspaper in his hand.*

KATHERINE. At last! A victory!

SIR JOHN. Thank God! [*He hands her the paper.*

KATHERINE. Oh, Dad!

She tears the paper open, and feverishly reads.

KATHERINE. At last!

The distant hum in the street is rising steadily. But SIR JOHN, *after the one exultant moment when he handed her the paper, stares dumbly at the floor.*

KATHERINE. [*Suddenly conscious of his gravity*] Father!

SIR JOHN. There is other news.

KATHERINE. One of the boys? Hubert?

[SIR JOHN *bows his head.*

KATHERINE. Killed?

[SIR JOHN *again bows his head.*

KATHERINE. The dream! [*She covers her face*] Poor Helen!

They stand for a few seconds silent, then SIR JOHN *raises his head, and putting up a hand, touches her wet cheek.*

SIR JOHN. [*Huskily*] Whom the gods love——

KATHERINE. Hubert!

SIR JOHN. And hulks like me go on living!

KATHERINE. Dear Dad!

SIR JOHN. But we shall drive the ruffians now! We shall break them. Stephen back?

KATHERINE. Last night.

SIR JOHN. Has he finished his blasphemous speech-making at last? [KATHERINE *shakes her head*] Not?

Then, seeing that KATHERINE *is quivering with emotion, he strokes her hand.*

SIR JOHN. My dear! Death is in many houses!

KATHERINE. I must go to Helen. Tell Stephen, Father. I can't.

SIR JOHN. If you wish, child.

She goes out, leaving SIR JOHN *to his grave, puzzled grief; and in a few seconds* MORE *comes in.*

MORE. Yes, Sir John. You wanted me?

SIR JOHN. Hubert is killed.

MORE. Hubert!

SIR JOHN. By these—whom you uphold. Katherine asked me to let you know. She's gone to Helen. I understand you only came back last night from your—— No word I can use would give what I feel about that. I don't know how things stand now between you and Katherine; but I tell you this, Stephen: you've tried her these last two months beyond what any woman ought to bear!

[MORE *makes a gesture of pain.*

SIR JOHN. When you chose your course——

MORE. Chose!

SIR JOHN. You placed yourself in opposition to every feeling in her. You knew this might come. It may come again with another of my sons——

MORE. I would willingly change places with any one of them.

SIR JOHN. Yes—I can believe in your unhappiness. I cannot conceive of greater misery than to be arrayed against your country. If I could have Hubert back, I would not have him at such a price—no, nor all my sons. *Pro patriâ mori*—— My boy, at all events, is happy!

MORE. Yes!

SIR JOHN. Yet you can go on doing what you are! What devil of pride has got into you, Stephen?

MORE. Do you imagine I think myself better than the humblest private fighting out there? Not for a minute.

SIR JOHN. I don't understand you. I always thought you devoted to Katherine.

MORE. Sir John, you believe that country comes before wife and child?

SIR JOHN. I do.

MORE. So do I.

SIR JOHN. [*Bewildered*] Whatever my country does or leaves undone, I no more presume to judge her than I presume to judge my God. [*With all the exaltation of the suffering he has undergone for her*] My country!

MORE. I would give all I have—for that creed.

SIR JOHN. [*Puzzled*] Stephen, I've never looked on you as a crank; I always believed you sane and honest. But this is—visionary mania.

MORE. Vision of what might be.

SIR JOHN. Why can't you be content with what the grandest nation—the grandest men on earth—have found good enough for them? I've known them, I've seen what they could suffer, for our country.

MORE. Sir John, imagine what the last two months have been to me! To see people turn away in the street—old friends pass me as if I were a wall! To dread the post! To go to bed every night with the sound of hooting in my ears! To know that my name is never referred to without contempt——

SIR JOHN. You have your new friends. Plenty of them, I understand.

MORE. Does that make up for being spat at as I was last night? Your battles are fool's play to it.

The stir and rustle of the crowd in the street grows louder. SIR JOHN *turns his head towards it.*

SIR JOHN. You've heard there's been a victory. Do

you carry your unnatural feeling so far as to be sorry for that? [MORE *shakes his head*] That's something! For God's sake, Stephen, stop before it's gone past mending. Don't ruin your life with Katherine. Hubert was her favourite brother; you are backing those who killed him. Think what that means to her! Drop this—mad Quixotism—idealism—whatever you call it. Take Katherine away. Leave the country till the thing's over—this country of yours that you're opposing, and—and—traducing. Take her away! Come! What good are you doing? What earthly good? Come, my boy! Before you're utterly undone.

MORE. Sir John! Our men are dying out there for the faith that's in them! I believe my faith the higher, the better for mankind—— Am I to slink away? Since I began this campaign I've found hundreds who've thanked me for taking this stand. They look on me now as their leader. Am I to desert them? When you led your forlorn hope—did you ask yourself what good you were doing, or whether you'd come through alive? It's my forlorn hope not to betray those who are following me; and not to help let die a fire—a fire that's sacred—not only now in this country, but in all countries, for all time.

SIR JOHN. [*After a long stare*] I give you credit for believing what you say. But let me tell you whatever that fire you talk of—I'm too old-fashioned to grasp—one fire you *are* letting die—your wife's love. By God! This crew of your new friends, this crew of cranks and jays, if they can make up to you for the

loss of her love—of your career, of all those who used to like and respect you—so much the better for you. But if you find yourself bankrupt of affection—alone as the last man on earth; if this business ends in your utter ruin and destruction—as it must—I shall not pity—I cannot pity you. Good-night!

He marches to the door, opens it, and goes out. MORE *is left standing perfectly still. The stir and murmur of the street is growing all the time, and slowly forces itself on his consciousness. He goes to the bay window and looks out; then rings the bell. It is not answered, and, after turning up the lights, he rings again.* KATHERINE *comes in. She is wearing a black hat, and black outdoor coat. She speaks coldly without looking up.*

KATHERINE. You rang!

MORE. For them to shut this room up.

KATHERINE. The servants have gone out. They're afraid of the house being set on fire.

MORE. I see.

KATHERINE. They have not your ideals to sustain them. [MORE *winces*] I am going with Helen and Olive to Father's.

MORE. [*Trying to take in the exact sense of her words*] Good! You prefer that to an hotel? [KATHERINE *nods. Gently*] Will you let me say, Kit, how terribly I feel for you—Hubert's——

KATHERINE. Don't. I ought to have made what I meant plainer. I am not coming back.

MORE. Not——? Not while the house——

KATHERINE. Not—at all.

MORE. Kit!

KATHERINE. I warned you from the first. You've gone too far!

MORE. [*Terribly moved*] Do you understand what this means? After ten years—and all—our love!

KATHERINE. *Was* it love? How could you ever have loved one so unheroic as myself!

MORE. This is madness, Kit—Kit!

KATHERINE. Last night I was ready. You couldn't. If you couldn't then, you never can. You are very exalted, Stephen. I don't like living—I won't live, with one whose equal I am not. This has been coming ever since you made that speech. I told you that night what the end would be.

MORE. [*Trying to put his arms round her*] Don't be so terribly cruel!

KATHERINE. No! Let's have the truth! People so wide apart don't love! Let me go!

MORE. In God's name, how can I help the difference in our faiths?

KATHERINE. Last night you used the word—bargain. Quite right. I meant to buy you. I meant to kill your faith. You showed me what I was doing. I don't like to be shown up as a driver of bargains, Stephen.

MORE. God knows—I never meant——

KATHERINE. If I'm not yours in spirit—I don't choose to be your—mistress.

MORE, *as if lashed by a whip, has thrown up his hands in an attitude of defence.*

KATHERINE. Yes, that's cruel! It shows the heights you live on. I won't drag you down.

MORE. For God's sake, put your pride away, and *see!* I'm fighting for the faith that's in me. What else can a man do? What else? Ah! Kit! Do see!

KATHERINE. I'm strangled here! Doing nothing—sitting silent—when my brothers are fighting, and being killed. I shall try to go out nursing. Helen will come with me. I have my faith, too; my poor common love of country. I can't stay here with you. I spent last night on the floor—thinking—and I know!

MORE. And Olive?

KATHERINE. I shall leave her at Father's, with Nurse; unless you forbid me to take her. You can.

MORE. [*Icily*] That I shall not do—you know very well. You are free to go, and to take her.

KATHERINE. [*Very low*] Thank you! [*Suddenly she turns to him, and draws his eyes on her. Without a sound, she puts her whole strength into that look*] Stephen! Give it up! Come down to me!

The festive sounds from the street grow louder. There can be heard the blowing of whistles, and bladders, and all the sounds of joy.

MORE. And drown in—*that?*

KATHERINE *turns swiftly to the door. There she stands and again looks at him. Her face is mysterious, from the conflicting currents of her emotions.*

MORE. So—you're going?

KATHERINE. [*In a whisper*] Yes.

She bends her head, opens the door, and goes. MORE *starts forward as if to follow her, but* OLIVE *has appeared in the doorway. She has on a straight little white coat and a round white cap.*

OLIVE. Aren't you coming with us, Daddy?

[MORE *shakes his head.*

OLIVE. Why not?

MORE. Never mind, my dicky bird.

OLIVE. The motor'll have to go very slow. There are such a lot of people in the street. Are you staying to stop them setting the house on fire? [MORE *nods*] May I stay a little, too? [MORE *shakes his head*] Why?

MORE. [*Putting his hand on her head*] Go along, my pretty!

OLIVE. Oh! love me up, Daddy!

[MORE *takes and loves her up*

OLIVE. Oo-o!

MORE. Trot, my soul!

She goes, looks back at him, turns suddenly, and vanishes.

MORE *follows her to the door, but stops there. Then, as full realization begins to dawn on him, he runs to the bay window, craning his head to catch sight of the front door. There is the sound of a vehicle starting, and the continual hooting of its horn as it makes its way among the crowd. He turns from the window.*

MORE. Alone as the last man on earth!

Suddenly a voice rises clear out of the hurly-burly in the street.

VOICE. There 'e is! That's 'im! More! Traitor! More!

A shower of nutshells, orange-peel, and harmless missiles begins to rattle against the glass of the window. Many voices take up the groaning: "More! Traitor! Black-leg! More!" *And through the window can be seen waving flags and lighted Chinese lanterns, swinging high on long bamboos. The din of execration swells.* MORE *stands unheeding, still gazing after the cab. Then, with a sharp crack, a flung stone crashes through one of the panes. It is followed by a hoarse shout of laughter, and a hearty groan. A second stone crashes through the glass.* MORE *turns for a moment, with a contemptuous look, towards the street, and the flare of the Chinese lanterns lights up his face. Then, as if forgetting all about the din outside, he moves back into the room, looks round him, and lets his head droop. The din rises louder and louder; a third stone crashes through.* MORE *raises his head again, and, clasping his hands, looks straight before him. The footman,* HENRY, *entering, hastens to the French windows.*

MORE. Ah! Henry, I thought you'd gone.

FOOTMAN. I came back, sir.

MORE. Good fellow!

FOOTMAN. They're trying to force the terrace gate, sir. They've no business coming on to private property—no matter what!

In the surging entrance of the mob the footman, HENRY, *who shows fight, is overwhelmed, hustled out into the crowd on the terrace, and no more seen.* The MOB *is a mixed crowd of revellers of both sexes, medical students, clerks, shop men and girls, and a Boy Scout or two. Many have exchanged hats—some wear masks, or false noses, some carry feathers or tin whistles. Some, with bamboos and Chinese lanterns, swing them up outside on the terrace. The medley of noises is very great. Such ringleaders as exist in the confusion are a* GROUP OF STUDENTS, *the chief of whom, conspicuous because unadorned, is an athletic, hatless young man with a projecting underjaw, and heavy coal-black moustache, who seems with the swing of his huge arms and shoulders to sway the currents of motion. When the first surge of noise and movement subsides, he calls out:* "To him, boys! Chair the hero!" THE STUDENTS *rush at the impassive* MORE, *swing him roughly on to their shoulders and bear him round the room. When they have twice circled the table to the music of their confused singing, groans and whistling,* THE CHIEF OF THE STUDENTS *calls out:* "Put him down!" *Obediently they set him down on the table which has been forced*

into the bay window, and stand gaping up at him.

CHIEF STUDENT. Speech! Speech!

The noise ebbs, and MORE *looks round him.*

CHIEF STUDENT. Now then, you, sir.

MORE. [*In a quiet voice*] Very well. You are here by the law that governs the action of all mobs—the law of Force. By that law, you can do what you like to this body of mine.

A VOICE. And we will, too.

MORE. I don't doubt it. But before that, I've a word to say.

A VOICE. You've always that.

[ANOTHER VOICE *raises a donkey's braying.*

MORE. You—Mob—are the most contemptible thing under the sun. When you walk the street—God goes in.

CHIEF STUDENT. Be careful, you—sir.

VOICES. Down him! Down with the beggar!

MORE. [*Above the murmurs*] My fine friends, I'm not afraid of you. You've forced your way into my house, and you've asked me to speak. Put up with the truth for once! [*His words rush out*] You are the thing that pelts the weak; kicks women; howls down free speech. This to-day, and that to-morrow. Brain—you have none. Spirit—not the ghost of it! If you're not meanness, there's no such thing. If you're not cowardice, there is no cowardice [*Above the growing fierceness of the hubbub*] Patriotism—there are two

kinds—that of our soldiers, and this of mine. You have neither!

CHIEF STUDENT. [*Checking a dangerous rush*] Hold on! Hold on! [*To* MORE] Swear to utter no more blasphemy against your country: Swear it!

CROWD. Ah! Ay! Ah!

MORE. My country is not yours. Mine is that great country which shall never take toll from the weakness of others. [*Above the groaning*] Ah! you can break my head and my windows; but don't think that you can break my faith. You could never break or shake it, if you were a million to one.

A girl with dark eyes and hair all wild, leaps out from the crowd and shakes her fist at him.

GIRL. You're friends with them that killed my lad! [MORE *smiles down at her, and she swiftly plucks the knife from the belt of a Boy Scout beside her*] Smile, you—cur!

A violent rush and heave from behind flings MORE *forward on to the steel. He reels, staggers back, and falls down amongst the crowd. A scream, a sway, a rush, a hubbub of cries. The* CHIEF STUDENT *shouts above the riot:* "Steady!" *Another:* "My God! He's got it!"

CHIEF STUDENT. Give him air!

The crowd falls back, and two STUDENTS, *bending over* MORE, *lift his arms and head, but they fall like lead. Desperately they test him for life.*

CHIEF STUDENT. By the Lord, it's over!

Then begins a scared swaying out towards the

window. Some one turns out the lights, and in the darkness the crowd fast melts away. The body of MORE *lies in the gleam from a single Chinese lantern. Muttering the words:* "Poor devil! He kept his end up anyway!" *the* CHIEF STUDENT *picks from the floor a little abandoned Union Jack and lays it on* MORE'S *breast. Then he, too, turns, and rushes out.*

And the body of MORE *lies in the streak of light; and the noises in the street continue to rise.*

THE CURTAIN FALLS, BUT RISES AGAIN ALMOST AT ONCE.

AFTERMATH

late Spring dawn is just breaking. Against trees in leaf and blossom, with the houses of a London Square beyond, suffused by the spreading glow, is seen a dark life-size statue on a granite pedestal. In front is the broad, dust-dim pavement. The light grows till the central words around the pedestal can be clearly read:

ERECTED
To the Memory
of
STEPHEN MORE
"Faithful to his ideal"

High above, the face of MORE *looks straight before him with a faint smile. On one shoulder and on his bare head two sparrows have perched, and from the gardens, behind, comes the twittering and singing of birds.*

THE CURTAIN FALLS.

END

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